

Would There Have Been Gothic Art Without the Vikings? The Contribution of Scandinavian Medieval Art

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Abstract

Even though Scandinavia is on the geographic periphery of Europe, it was vital to the cultural development of medieval Europe during the Viking Age of the ninth through eleventh centuries. This paper investigates how Scandinavian art counters many of our assumptions about media, religion and iconography, complicating our picture of medieval art in the rest of Europe. Scandinavia lacks monumental stone architecture and a manuscript tradition in the early medieval period, and most of the art of this era is pre-Christian and non-figural; instead of familiar Christian iconography, animal-style ornamentation on metal artifacts is the norm. I recommend that the few examples of northern art typically included in surveys of art history be placed in their social context, and I propose additional examples that should be added to such textbooks. I also explore how Scandinavian scholars contributed to methodological studies of classification and how studies of this region provide us with significant models of core/periphery relationships and multicultural interactions. Finally, I point out that Scandinavian art, especially via the Vikings, significantly affected the core of medieval European art and architecture.

Keywords

Archaeology, Christian, core and periphery, Gothic art, metalwork, minor arts, multiculturalism, pagan, runestones, Scandinavia, typology, Vikings, wood

The question in my title raises a perhaps exaggerated premise, but I pose it to draw attention to art from a geographically peripheral area of Europe, the northern fringe that has for the most part been excluded from the art-historical mainstream. A consideration of the topographies of medieval art allows us to focus on what is unique and special about a region as well as what is applicable to a broader area. My intent is to illuminate how many of the artistic traditions of this region are integral rather than marginal to

a comprehensive view of European medieval art history and to demonstrate what can be gained for the broader field by extending the boundaries to incorporate a more inclusive conception of medieval art. I highlight Scandinavian medieval art, considering, first, what is widely known about this art (and might be regarded as canonical) as well as what has not been given wider attention; second, why this art has been marginalized; and, finally, how this peripheral tradition should be viewed in its own right as an agent in the formation of European culture, not merely relegated to a level of indigenous curiosity. Rather than looking only at how Scandinavia has been influenced by other cultures, I focus on what we can learn from examining how the traditions of the margins have contributed to the core and participated in the maintenance of central ideas.

Scandinavian Medieval Art as Part of the “Canon”

Only a few examples of Scandinavian art are included in the recently expanded canon presented in art-history survey textbooks,¹ or even in the more focused surveys of medieval art.² Scandinavian medieval art is represented most often by the same few objects. Certainly the Viking Age Oseberg ship and the so-called “Academic” animal-head post from the Oseberg burial fall into this standard repertoire.³ Likewise, the late-Viking reused panels from the Urnes stave church portal—although, strangely enough, not the Urnes church itself—are also standard fare.⁴ In addition, Stokstad

¹ Art history surveys that I examine include: Penelope J. E. Davies et al., *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 7th edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2007); Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art through the Ages: A Global History*, 13th edn (Boston, MA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2009); and Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, 3rd edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2008) (hereafter Janson; Gardner; and Stokstad, *Art History*).

² Surveys of medieval art that I consider include: Henry Luttikhuizen and Dorothy Verkerk, *Snyder's Medieval Art*, 2nd edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006) (hereafter Snyder); Lawrence Nees, *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Marilyn Stokstad, *Medieval Art*, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 2004).

³ Håkon Shetelig labeled the animal head, as cited in David M. Wilson and Ole Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art*, 2nd edn (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), 54. The Oseberg animal head is pictured in Janson, 316, and Gardner, 410, while only Stokstad, 459–460, shows the Oseberg ship and its prow.

⁴ Gardner, 410; Stokstad, *Art History*, 462.

includes the Gummersmark brooch, the Jelling runestones, and the Borgund stave church.⁵

Medieval surveys include all of the examples previously discussed plus a few pre-Viking pieces, such as gold bracteates or pendant amulets of the Migration Period (ca. A.D. 450-600)⁶ and an eponymous Vendel-style harness mount from the subsequent Vendel or Merovingian Period (ca. 600-800).⁷ These objects are representative of the media characteristic of Scandinavian art—wood carving and metalwork. Viking-era stone carving is represented in textbooks solely by the runestones at Jelling, in Denmark.⁸ While runestones are numerous especially in the Swedish province of Uppland, Denmark has relatively few, and the larger of two stones at Jelling is exceptional rather than typical. Within the context of a study of European medieval art, it has undoubtedly been chosen as a focal object because of the image of Christ bound by snakes in a cross-shaped pose and its remarkable runic inscription that boasts about Harald Bluetooth, who “won all of Norway” and converted the Danes to Christianity.⁹ However, another side of the stone displays a large standing animal that is characteristic of the Scandinavian animal style (Fig. 1). These two sides of the stone are indicative of two aspects of medieval Scandinavian art—pagan and Christian—that I discuss in this paper.

Marilyn Stokstad situates her discussion of the Migration Period and the Vendel Period by introducing Celtic and Scythian art.¹⁰ While her attempt to place early medieval polychrome and animal styles into a larger context is commendable, the proximity of the presentation of Scythian and Vendel art might be misconstrued by general readers to imply that the Scandinavian work was directly influenced by the Scythian. Such an erroneous inference is further encouraged because the figure illustrating Scythian gold work is labeled “4th century,” with no indication that it should be “4th century B.C.” Although the art is superficially similar—both feature animals—scholars have discounted an association between Scythian work dating to the middle of the first millennium B.C. with early medieval art from over a thousand years later.¹¹ Making connections across such vast

⁵ Stokstad, *Art History*, 446, 461-463.

⁶ Nees, 78, 104.

⁷ Stokstad, *Medieval Art*, 77.

⁸ Stokstad, *Art History*, 461; Nees, 217.

⁹ Wilson and Klindt-Jensen, 119-121.

¹⁰ Stokstad, *Medieval Art*, 75-77.

¹¹ See in particular Günther Haseloff, “Salin’s Style I,” *Medieval Archaeology* 18 (1974),



Figure 1. The “great beast” on runestone (DR 42), Jelling, Jutland, Denmark (photograph by Bengt A. Lundberg, courtesy of the Swedish National Heritage Board). This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>

time and space exoticizes Scandinavian art as “the other,” outside the realm of early medieval European art.

Why has Scandinavian Art been Underrepresented?

There are many reasons why Viking art and, more generally, Scandinavian art of the Middle Ages have been underrepresented within the larger study

1-15, and Haseloff, “Zum Ursprung der germanischen Tierornamentik—die spätrömische Wurzel,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 7 (1973), 406-442.

of European medieval art. Possible explanations include (1) pragmatic limitations due to distance and language, (2) structural impediments of discipline and periodization, (3) disparities of scale, media and function, and (4) diversity of subject matter and religion.

Pragmatic Reasons: Distance and Languages

At a basic level, Scandinavian art is indeed peripheral simply because of its physical distance from the rest of Europe; only the Jutish peninsula and Finland are physically connected to the Continent. While the British Isles are also separate, and Iberia and Italy project from the larger landmass, great distances compounded by physical detachment make Scandinavia even more tangential. The distance from Copenhagen to northern Norway is greater than that from Copenhagen to Rome. This expanse means that art historians who study in the British Isles or on the Continent rarely travel to Scandinavia and non-Scandinavians who study Scandinavia face logistic difficulties more complex than those who study, for instance, Gothic France.

Languages also present stumbling blocks for familiarity with the Nordic fringe. Few art historians besides natives of the area have mastered the necessary languages, modern as well as medieval. For serious study in this field, Old Norse is necessary in addition to Latin, and modern Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are crucial—in addition to French and German, still required for the Ph.D. As graduate programs push Ph.D. candidates to make faster progress on their degrees, students are dissuaded from spending extra years studying additional languages. While the Scandinavian languages are relatively accessible to anyone who has studied German, the sheer number of different tongues may deter North American scholars. Non-Indo-European Finnish poses even more of a problem for outsiders.

Structural Impediments of Disciplines and Periodization

Scandinavian medieval art has been marginalized by self-imposed boundaries of discipline and periodization between art and archaeology, historic and proto-historic periods, and Christian and non-Christian eras. Art of the Migration Period and the Viking Age is not customarily considered part of art history by Scandinavian scholars, so it is curious that the animal-style art familiar to the international art-historical community is rarely studied by art historians within Scandinavia. A synthesis of Viking Age art

was written by an Englishman, Sir David M. Wilson, as the only part of a 14-volume series on Swedish art written by a non-Swede.¹² Although there are many Swedish archaeologists who are scholars of the Viking Age, there are currently no Swedish art historians who study this period. When I have mentioned to Scandinavian scholars that I study Migration Period Scandinavian art, I have been told emphatically that Scandinavia did not yet have art during that period. In a 1989 study titled *Swedish Mentality*, Åke Daun reported that Swedes seem to have a sense of self-deprecation about their nation's cultural heritage.¹³ He reports that in response to a multinational survey that asked what citizens were proud of in their respective countries, 71% of Swedes listed "nature and natural resources." "Culture and art" was not even mentioned by Swedish respondents, whereas that category topped the list for Italians and French. Tourists' views of Vikings, which focus on rape and pillage, are encouraged by "a lingering effort to maintain a picture of primitive, rude [boors] as a way of sustaining local... myths, but this does not enhance the view of Nordic art."¹⁴ This self-negation of early art is pervasive and may be contrasted with notions about early Irish art and identity.

In Scandinavian institutions, the scholarly study of art history begins with the earliest widespread Christian art during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Prior to that, the medieval period in Scandinavia is proto-historic, with the only indigenous documents consisting of brief, enigmatic runic inscriptions preserved on metalwork, wood and stone rather than illuminated manuscripts in Latin. The era that North Americans categorize as "early medieval art" is studied in Scandinavia by Iron Age archaeologists as material culture rather than art. This division into domains of

¹² David M. Wilson, *Vikingatidens Konst*, vol. 2, Signums svenska konsthistoria (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1995). The first volume, covering the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age, was written by three Swedish archaeologists: Lars Larsson, Thomas B. Larsson and Birgit Arrhenius, *Stenåldern, Bronsåldern, Järnåldern*, vol. 1, Signums svenska konsthistoria (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1994). A one-volume survey of Swedish art devotes one page to Stone Age art preceding 1500 B.C., one page to Bronze Age art from ca. 1500 B.C.-ca. 500 B.C., nine pages to Iron Age art from ca. 500 B.C.-ca. 1000 A.D. (including Viking Age art), and then 69 pages to medieval art from 1000-1520. See Mereth Lindgren et al., *A History of Swedish Art* (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1987).

¹³ Åke Daun, *Swedish Mentality* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 153.

¹⁴ Richard Hodges, "The Not-So-Dark Ages," *Archaeology* 51.5 (1998), 65.

art history and archaeology has led to a self-imposed seclusion of northern art from the mainstream of European medieval art.

Archaeology has played a central role in understanding the complex history and prehistory of Scandinavia. Archaeology is the study of all material culture, everyday things as well as precious things, and is thus broader than art history. Because archaeology as a discipline depends upon digging in the earth, it is associated with the manual trades that Giorgio Vasari used to distinguish the major media from the minor or decorative arts¹⁵ (architecture also involves mundane manual labor, but Vasari focused on the lofty ideas in the mind of the architect who shapes space rather than on the physical aspects of building). Marginalization of early medieval Scandinavian arts as indigenous archaeological curiosities reveals more about scholars' assumptions than about the actual status of contemporary artists in that society.

Discovery in the earth also constitutes a pragmatic as well as disciplinary explanation for why early medieval Scandinavian art has been discounted. While many of the minor arts of Continental and Insular Western Europe were housed primarily in church treasuries until the advent of modern museums, and many exalted objects remain in religious settings even today, most Scandinavian early medieval art has been recovered through archaeological excavation. Conservation in cathedral treasuries rather than extrication directly from the earth seems to lend greater status to objects.

Scale, Media and Function: Artifacts and the Minor Arts

Unlike Continental and Insular traditions, early medieval Scandinavian art may be stigmatized because of a dearth of stone architecture and illuminated manuscripts. The remains of Viking Age architecture—archaeological vestiges marked by grassy mounds and boulders—may be unimpressive to those who thrill to French Gothic cathedrals. Ephemeral Viking structures of wattle and daub did not leave majestic ruins with great tourism potential.¹⁶ Since the period is proto-historic, there are no indigenous illuminated manuscripts and no tradition of painting that survives beyond hints of pigment on a few wooden panels.¹⁷ However, the

¹⁵ As noted by Brigitte Buettner, "Toward a Historiography of the Sumptuous Arts," in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 466.

¹⁶ Hodges, "The Not-So-Dark Ages," 63.

¹⁷ For instance, Ellen Marie Magerøy, "Flatatunga Problems," *Acta Archaeologica* 32 (1961), 153–172; and Ingegerd Marxen and Erik Moltke, "The Jelling Man: Denmark's

absence of stately architecture and rich manuscripts may be compensated by a limited though important stock of extant wooden sculpture, including carvings from the Oseberg ship burial (which may represent only a fraction of contemporary carving), runestones, and a wealth of metal jewelry and weapons.

Scandinavian early medieval art suffers from the same inherent bias against the so-called minor arts that has also relegated book covers, chalices and reliquaries to a supporting role in art history. If these works that are central to Christian practice are considered “minor” in Continental Europe, then Scandinavian metalwork, runestones and wood carvings must be even more minor. Christian or non-Christian, these objects are hardly given a second thought by most art historians, just as jewelry and vessels of any period, except for ancient Greek pottery, are rarely studied by art historians, consigned to the realm of archaeologists or social historians. Following Vasari, architecture, sculpture and painting have been considered the “major” arts; however, part of the distinction between major and minor arts may be whether we regard the work as “art” or as “artifact.” All art objects are artifacts, but only certain artifacts—presumably of high aesthetic value—are typically treated as art. Jules David Prown has drawn attention to the double root of the word “artifact”—connecting “art” from *ars*, *artis* (skill in joining) and *fact* through *factum* (deed or act) from “to make or to do”—“emphasizing the utilitarian meaning already implicit in the word art; thus skill or knowledge is applied to the making of a thing.”¹⁸ He further states that “many cultures do not have a special category of objects identified as art.” The categories in the Scandinavian early medieval period surely were different from either Vasari’s or our use of the terms “art” and “artifact.”

Classification schemes of visual resource collections were designed to accommodate the major arts of architecture, painting and sculpture, but these systems become more ambiguous when dealing with such things as metalwork and ships. It is logical to consider small objects such as jewelry literally as “minor” arts, yet size is not always the sole consideration in determining major or minor status. Extensive collections may have a

Oldest Figure-Painting,” *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* 20 (1981), 267–275.

¹⁸ Jules David Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?” in *History from Things*, eds Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 2.

category for “vehicles,” but more limited visual resource centers sometimes force them into either sculpture or architecture, or even minor arts—although it is conceptually difficult to consider something as large as a 22-m-long ship “minor.”

A role in determining whether an object is classified with major or minor media is played not only by an object’s size but also by its function and aesthetics. Some would divide works with an obvious practical purpose from those with a less clearly utilitarian aspect, thus separating functional brooches and wrist-clasps that hold together clothing and vehicles that provide transport from non-functional paintings and sculpture. Yet articles that are “useful” also may be aesthetically pleasing, such as, for instance, Mimbres pottery, *kente* cloth, or medieval book covers. Similarly, a Viking Urnes-style brooch may be functional and simultaneously aesthetically pleasing or “artistic” (Fig. 2).

Non-Christian and Non-Narrative Subject Matter

Most Scandinavian early medieval art displays decorative stylization based on animals. This divergence from Christian and classical iconography separates it—along with Islamic art—from the narrativity and figural preoccupation of most of Western medieval art history.¹⁹ Unlike Islamic art, northern art has not found its own niche and is often described by absence—it is not Christian or Jewish or Islamic; it is, by default, “none of the above.” The terms “barbarian,” “heathen,” “pagan,” or “non-Christian” seem awkward (thankfully, no one has suggested “non-Jewish” or “non-Islamic”) to describe Scandinavian art before Christianization around the eleventh century, but there is no succinct, entirely acceptable term to describe the indigenous Scandinavian religion.²⁰

Small size and practical function may explain why some Scandinavian art has been overlooked, but it is more difficult to comprehend why large

¹⁹ Comment by Annabel Wharton on Mickey Abel Turby’s paper, “Defining the Islamic Discourse: The Perspective Offered by Christian Ada,” presented at the 1998 annual meeting of the College Art Association in Toronto.

²⁰ Current discussions of Scandinavian religions include Thomas A. DuBois, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) and Gro Steinsland, *Norrøn religion: Myter, riter, samfunn* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2005). Steinsland specifically takes up the issue of what should we call the religion during the Viking period, and DuBois examines all of the pre-Christian religions of the Nordic region, not just those of the Germanic-speaking peoples but also the Finnish and Sámi cultures.



Figure 2. Urnes-style brooch from Lindholm Høje, Jutland, Denmark; The Lindholm Høje Museum (photograph by Jan Ebbe Slot-Carlsen, Nordjyllands Historiske Museum, Denmark); 3.2×3.1 cm without ring; ring diameter 1.8 cm. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>

Viking Age runestones with elegant interlace designs have been excluded from the overall corpus of medieval sculpture. They are unmistakable examples of monumental stone sculpture that would fit into Vasari's scheme for the major arts. In addition, most of these stones are Christian, as betrayed by prominent crosses carved in low relief and explicitly Christian

inscriptions (Fig. 3). Formulae on such stones include “God and God’s Mother help his soul” (*Gud hialpi hans and ok salu ok Guds modiR*) and “They died in white (i.e., baptismal) clothes” (*ThæiR dou i hvitavadum*), in runes rather than the Roman alphabet.²¹

Most runestone carvings are neither narrative nor figural and very few display Christian imagery besides the cross. A notable exception is the stone from Dynna, in Norway, which illustrates the Nativity, the Magi, and the star of Bethlehem.²² The small number of these monuments with narrative indigenous Scandinavian scenes, such as allusions to the Old Norse Eddas on Gotland pictures stones and the story of Sigurd on a rock outcropping at Ramsund in Södermanland, Sweden, boast an iconography largely unfamiliar to scholars who study only Christian medieval art²³ (Fig. 4). The animal style is prominent and the inscriptions, bounded by bands of interlaced animals and written in indigenous runic characters, look exotic to the uninitiated. The lack of recognizable iconography on most stones, along with the symbolic animal style, contrasts sharply with Mediterranean-based medieval Christian art. Runestones—large, stone and with explicitly Christian inscriptions—should be guaranteed entrance into the corpus of Christian medieval art, yet they have been excluded from general studies of medieval sculpture.

Incorporating the Margins for a More Inclusive Conception of European Medieval Art

The reasons advanced above for why most Scandinavian art has been omitted from a broad view of medieval art may explain—but do not excuse—the oversight. Similar motivations have contributed to the general neglect of other peripheral regions, too, but these grounds should not be offered as justifications for disregarding the diversity of medieval art. In order to allow northern art “a seat at the table,” I propose to (1) place northern art in context and bring minor arts (of Scandinavia and elsewhere) to their

²¹ Elias Wessén and Sven B. F. Jansson, *Upplands Runinskrifter*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1940–1943), U 160 and U 243; see also Sven B. F. Jansson, *Runes in Sweden* (Stockholm: Gidlunds, 1987), 112–113.

²² Magnus Olsen, ed., *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Oslo: Dybwald, 1941), N68; and Peter Anker, *The Art of Scandinavia*, vol. 1 (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1970), 172.

²³ Anker, *The Art of Scandinavia*, 196–198.



Figure 3. Runestone with cross (U 613), from Torsätra, Västra Ryds parish, Uppland, Sweden (photograph by Bengt A. Lundberg, courtesy of the Swedish National Heritage Board); height above ground 1.55 m. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>



Figure 4. Runic carving on rock outcropping (Sö 101), Ramsundberget, Jäder, Södermanland, Sweden (photograph by Bengt A. Lundberg, courtesy of the Swedish National Heritage Board); carved area 4.70 m long. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>

rightful place, (2) elucidate the methodological contribution of Scandinavian scholars to the study of typological development and classification of artifacts, and (3) re-examine core and periphery models, foregrounding Scandinavia as an example of diversity in medieval culture.

Placing Scandinavian Art in Context

The slim offerings on Scandinavian art in textbooks can be augmented with additional examples of jewelry, runestones and stave churches to place the textbook authors' standard choices in context when teaching a medieval survey or a course on early medieval art. However, instructors who are not well versed in Scandinavian art might be tempted to leave out the whole lot. In the same way that it would be unimaginable for our students to look at only one Carolingian manuscript or one Romanesque cathedral, it is misleading to include only one runestone, especially the anomalous Jelling stone. This monument should be presented in the context of the more numerous and aesthetically developed Upplandic runestones of the eleventh century.²⁴ Similarly, the reused portal from the Urnes stave church could invite a broader discussion of stave church development in Norway as well as evidence of wooden church construction elsewhere in Europe.²⁵ Even if only a few examples are given, it is important to place them in the social context of their use.

Art history tends to focus on the exceptional, whereas archaeology encompasses the more mundane. Yet it is misleading for art historians to consider the most extraordinary art outside of the context in which it was produced and used. The Oseberg ship with its incredible wealth of woodcarving—not just the ship itself but also the enigmatic animal heads, the wagon, the sleds, the bed, etc.—was not a typical vessel. Scandinavian boats discovered at Gokstad, Ladby, Tune and Skuldelev were not as rich and not packed with additional wooden objects comparable to the finds from Oseberg.²⁶ This ship burial with its extraordinary woodcarving is an

²⁴ Sources of information in English on the art of runestones include Wilson and Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art*, 134–139, 150–152; Jansson, *Runes in Sweden*; and Birgit Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁵ Anker, *The Art of Scandinavia*, 200–452; and Claus Ahrens, *Die frühen Holzkirchen Europas* (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2001).

²⁶ A. W. Brøgger and Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1971); and Olaf Olsen and Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, *Five Viking Ships from Roskilde Fjord* (Copenhagen: The National Museum, 1978).

accident of survival and not a typical burial, and focusing on it gives the false impression that Viking men and women were commonly buried in ships. On the other hand, although the ship is unusual, the art styles represented there in wood also appear in contemporaneous metalwork throughout Scandinavia. Our view of Viking art is flawed if we consider those carvings without placing them in the broader framework of the medium and the style. Wood was ubiquitous rather than precious in Viking Age Scandinavia, but the carvings from the Oseberg ship, combined with other objects found in the grave mound, leave little doubt that the vessel was an extremely valuable possession associated with privileged members of society. Since wood is an impermanent material and most medieval wood has decayed, we have no idea how common intricate woodcarving was. However, in this culture it was a major artistic medium on par with precious metalwork.

Viking Age fine smiths and woodcarvers might be considered the Michelangelos of their era, beholden to and controlled by patrons—chieftains or kings—who were the equivalent of the popes of their day. Goldsmiths such as the legendary Volundr were sought after to make exquisite trinkets for privileged members of society, especially the leader and his retinue.²⁷ Similarly, much of Continental and Insular early medieval art was funded by royalty and by religious elites, including bishops, abbots and abbesses. These wealthy patrons sponsored the major arts of church building, sculpture and manuscript painting, as well as the so-called minor arts of ivory carvings, liturgical metalwork and ecclesiastical textiles. It has been suggested that the designation *ars sacra* should be substituted for the imperfect term “minor arts,”²⁸ but this term is hardly appropriate for early medieval Scandinavian metalwork that comprises personal ornaments and

²⁷ On the picture stone from Ardre on the island of Gotland as well as the Franks Casket (see Snyder, 153, for an illustration), see Heinrich Beck, “Der kunstfertige Schmied—ein ikonographisches und narratives Thema des frühen Mittelalters,” in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1980), 15-37; and Richard Abels, “What Has Weland To Do with Christ? The Franks Casket and the Acculturation of Christianity in Early Anglo-Saxon England,” *Speculum* 84 (2009), 549-581. For the Ardre stone, see also Erik Nylén and Jan Peder Lamm, *Stones, Ships and Symbols* (Stockholm: Gidlunds Bokförlag, 1988), 52, 71.

²⁸ Term used by Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, 2nd edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), and also recommended by Ilene Forsyth in comments to the session “The Coming of Age of Medieval ‘Minor’ Arts,” at the 2007 annual meeting of the College Art Association in New York.

weapons. The art was highly esteemed and perhaps sacred—but pagan rather than Christian. In this period, the so-called minor arts were indeed the major arts sponsored by elites.

The Methodological Contribution of Scandinavian Art for the Study of Typology

The Scandinavian early medieval styles depicted on such metalwork formed the basis for a key conceptual tool of the disciplines of art history and archaeology—the typological development of style. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Christian Jurgenson Thomson, Oscar Montelius and Bernhard Salin used art-historical stylistic features combined with archaeological find combinations to date fibulae, stamped pendants known as bracteates, and other objects.²⁹ The systematic method, which was rapidly adopted throughout Scandinavia and quickly spread to Germany, has implicitly or explicitly been used since that time in both art history and archaeology, and it was crucial for the development of the construct of the “three-age system” of the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age.³⁰ Scholars have expended a great deal of effort on developing competing systems of classification, some based on statistical analytical methods and others on connoisseurship. While archaeologists have focused upon statistical sorting of artifact characteristics, much of the discussion among prehistorians has centered upon whether archaeologists create types that may have had no meaning to the people who produced the artifacts or discover pre-existing types that had some connection with the “living” culture.³¹ Art

²⁹ Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, “Om Guldbracteaterne,” *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1855), 265–347; Oscar Montelius, *Från Jernåldern* (Stockholm: Ivar Hæggström, 1869); Oscar Montelius, “Typologien eller utvecklingsläran tillämpad på det mänskliga arbetet,” *Svenska Fornminnesföreningens Tidskrift* 10 (1900), 237–268; Bernhard Salin, “De nordiska Guldbrakteaterna,” *Antiquarisk tidskrift för Sverige* 14 (1895), 1–111, and Bernhard Salin, *Die Altgermanische Thierornamentik* (Stockholm: K. L. Beckman, 1904).

³⁰ See Bo Gräslund, *The Birth of Prehistoric Chronology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), for a full discussion of the significance of typological classification for chronology.

³¹ Leo S. Klejn, *Archaeological Typology*, British Archaeological Reports International Series 153 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1982); Robert C. Dunnell, “Methodological Issues in Americanist Artifact Classification,” *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 9 (1986), 149–207; Anne Birgitte Gebauer, “Stylistic Analysis. A Critical Review of Concepts, Models, and Applications,” *Journal of Danish Archaeology* 6 (1987), 223–229; William Y. Adams and Ernest W. Adams, *Archaeological Typology and Practical*

historians have concentrated on more impressionistic descriptions of style, yet both groups of scholars make assumptions about the formal development or even the “evolution” of artifacts, types and styles.³²

Art-history textbooks and surveys of medieval art typically present the Germanic (or Scandinavian) animal style by illustrating the buckle, shoulder clasps, or purse mount from the early seventh-century Sutton Hoo ship burial.³³ In his book on early medieval art, Nees considers the Sutton Hoo material in more detail than other surveys. He discusses this material immediately following his presentation of the animal Style II (also known as Salin’s Style II after the Swede Bernhard Salin); yet he stops short of identifying the Sutton Hoo material as Style II. He misses a pedagogical opportunity to situate Style II as a phase in the stylistic evolution of Germanic (or Scandinavian) Styles I through III, thus leaving this second style stranded without a context. In fact, the animal styles that commence during the Migration Period (ca. 450-600) can be traced further into the Merovingian (or Vendel) Period (ca. 600-800) and the following Viking Age (ca. 800-1050) to continue the development of the animal styles for another half millennium with the Broa, Oseberg, Borre, Jellinge, Mammen, Ringerike, and Urnes styles.³⁴

Multiculturalism and the Relationship of Core to Periphery

Although Scandinavian art and culture has been marginalized in the broader study of art of the European Middle Ages, it contributed to traditions in other regions. Contrary to assumptions, the North was not truly peripheral during the Viking Age. To examine how Scandinavian art con-

Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and Dwight W. Read, *Artifact Classification: A Conceptual and Methodological Approach* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007).

³² Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1950, rpt., 7th edn, 1932), 6; Meyer Schapiro, “Style,” in *Anthropology Today*, ed. A. L. Kroeber (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 287-312; Ernst H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 21; and Leonard B. Meyer, “Toward a Theory of Style,” in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 21.

³³ Janson, 314-315; Gardner, 408-409; Stokstad, *Art History*, 446-447; Snyder, 151, Stokstad, *Medieval Art History*, 89-90; and Nees, 107-114.

³⁴ Wilson and Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art*; and Lennart Karlsson, *Nordisk Form om djurornamentik* (Stockholm: Statens Historiska Museum, 1983). Also, note that the style is spelled “Jellinge,” while the name of the site in Denmark is “Jelling.”

tributed to other areas, a re-examination of the relationships between core and periphery is needed. Michael Rowlands and Andrew Sherratt framed the broader issue for archaeological theory based on concepts developed from political theory and geography, specifically from Immanuel Wallerstein's 1974 theory of capitalist world economy.³⁵ Examining both sides of core–periphery relationships more fully might permit a more profound explanation of the art-historical contexts in which such relationships are played out.

By dismissing Scandinavia as peripheral, we reveal that implicitly ingrained in our thinking has been the “contrast between an innovative, developing, dynamic and dominant region and others which are backward and ultimately subjected.”³⁶ The very terms used—peripheries, margins, fringes—are heavily value-laden. They suggest objectionable overtones of dependency, degeneracy, or derivativeness and imply a bias, yet they also structure our thought patterns. Rowlands discussed how the pair of opposites, center and periphery, “requires a definition of ‘otherness,’ an excluded category of the incomprehensible or the undesirable against which the certainty and familiarity of habitual and traditional action can constantly be reaffirmed.”³⁷ One's own geographic and temporal position may inform what is perceived as peripheral. Peter Ucko points out that defining “otherness” is a relative concept and “is very much a matter of the power politics of any particular time—[such as] the all-embracing category of ‘barbarians’ as described by the Romans.... The nature of... a centre, and where exactly it is to be located, is not a simple matter of fact and physical location, but of attitude and perception.”³⁸ The core–periphery model is

³⁵ Michael Rowlands, “Centre and Periphery: A Review of a Concept,” in *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World*, eds Michael Rowlands, Mogens Larsen and Kristian Kristiansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1–11; Andrew Sherratt, “‘Who Are You Calling Peripheral?’ Dependence and Independence in European Prehistory,” in *Trade and Exchange in Prehistoric Europe*, eds Chris Scarre and Frances Healy (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1993), 245–255; and Immanuel Wallerstein. *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1974).

³⁶ Timothy C. Champion, “Introduction,” in *Centre and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology*, ed. Timothy C. Champion (London: Routledge, 1989), 2.

³⁷ Rowlands, “Centre and Periphery,” 2.

³⁸ Peter J. Ucko, “Foreword,” in *Centre and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology*, ed. Timothy C. Champion (London: Routledge, 1989), xiii.

oversimplified if we do not grasp that connections between core and periphery are dynamic and multidirectional rather than static.³⁹

I would like to offer three categories of Scandinavian medieval art that exemplify various relationships between core and periphery. These include northern art heavily inspired by the European core, indigenous Nordic art somewhat affected by Continental and Insular work, and Scandinavian art that shaped the culture of various regions of Europe. Consideration of these examples provides a richer and fuller vision of medieval art.

The first category comprises art and architecture in the Scandinavian periphery unmistakably influenced by the European core, particularly cases in which artists and craft workers came from the south, whether by migration, itinerancy, or employment by royalty. Examples include works undoubtedly derivative and connected to the Continent, such as Romanesque-style Lund Cathedral and Gothic-style Uppsala Cathedral.⁴⁰ Other examples include frescoes (Fig. 5) and paintings on wooden interiors of churches,⁴¹ as well as free-standing wooden ecclesiastical sculpture and stone baptismal fonts, including some with runic inscriptions.⁴²

³⁹ Ucko, "Foreword," xv.

⁴⁰ For Lund Cathedral, see Kenneth J. Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800-1200*, 4th edn (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1978), 432-433; and Aron Andersson, *The Art of Scandinavia*, vol. 2 (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1970), 36-42; and for Uppsala Cathedral, see Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, rev. edn by Paul Crossley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 216. For an overview of Scandinavian medieval architecture, see Marian C. Donnelly, *Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 29-83. For a comprehensive survey of Swedish medieval art and architecture in English, see Lindgren's chapter in *A History of Swedish Art*.

⁴¹ For painting and sculpture, see Andersson, *The Art of Scandinavia*, vol. 2, 240-327. Scandinavian painting is mentioned briefly by C. R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800-1200* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 317-318; for more detailed accounts, see Poul Nørlund and Egmont Lind, *Danmarks romanske Kalkmalerier* (Copenhagen: A. F. Høst, 1944); Axel Bolvig, *Kalkmalerier i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Sesam, 1999); Martin Blindheim, *Stave Church Paintings: Mediaeval Art from Norway* (New York, NY: New American Library with UNESCO, 1965); and Åke Nisbeth, *Bildernas Predikan: Medeltida Kalkmålningar i Sverige* (Stockholm: Gidlunds, 1986). For Gothic-style paintings dating to 1323 and 1493 in the wooden church of Södra Råda, Värmland, Sweden, which was destroyed by fire in 2001, see Marian Ullén, *Södra Råda gamla kyrka och dess målningar* (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1979).

⁴² For sculpture, see Aron Andersson, *English Influence in Norwegian and Swedish Figure Sculpture in Wood, 120-1270* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1950); Martin Blindheim, *Painted Wooden Sculpture in Norway, c. 1100-1250* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1998); Lennart Karlsson, *Romansk träornamentik i Sverige* (Stockholm: Almqvist and



Figure 5. “Death playing chess with a knight,” 1480s wall painting by Albertus Pictor, Täby church, Täby parish, Uppland, Sweden (photographer unknown, photograph courtesy of the Swedish National Heritage Board). This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via <http://www.brill.nl/me>

Much—but not all—of Scandinavian Christian medieval art of the twelfth century and later falls into this category. Such material can easily be incorporated into standard courses on specific periods of medieval art and architecture, but time does not often permit their inclusion in survey courses.

A second group includes works that are distinctive and indigenous, but tangentially connected to the Continent or the British Isles, showing the influence of the core on the periphery but also independent invention. These include such isolated but distinctive indigenous traditions as Gotlandic picture stones (Fig. 6),⁴³ Norwegian stave churches and their portals (Fig. 7),⁴⁴ the round churches of Bornholm (Fig. 8)⁴⁵ and the Danish golden altars.⁴⁶ While they may have a tangential connection to Continental or Insular works, they are usually relegated to the footnotes of surveys of European medieval art. Some efforts have been made to incorporate such idiosyncratic works within the dominant European tradition by showing the influence of core on periphery, including attempts to connect Gotlandic picture stones with Carolingian pictorial traditions and Holger Arbman's study of the impact of Carolingian trade and decorative art on Viking Period Sweden.⁴⁷

Finally, Scandinavia—supposedly the periphery—also influenced the European core, particularly during the Migration, Merovingian and Viking Periods when northern peoples settled in many parts of Europe, especially the British Isles, France and Russia. During the Migration Period of the fifth and sixth centuries, Scandinavian gold pendant amulets or bracte-

Wiksell International, 1976); Aron Andersson, *Medieval Wooden Sculpture in Sweden* (Uppsala: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1966); C. S. Drake, *The Romanesque Fonts of Northern Europe and Scandinavia* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002); and Johnny Roosval, *Die Steinmeister Gotlands* (Stockholm: Fritze, 1918).

⁴³ Nylén and Lamm, *Stones, Ships and Symbols*; and Sune Lindquist, *Gotlands Bildsteine*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1941–1942).

⁴⁴ Ahrens, *Die frühen Holzkirchen Europas*; Anker, *The Art of Scandinavia*, 200–452; Erla Bergendahl Hohler, *Norwegian Stave Church Sculpture*, 2 vols. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1999).

⁴⁵ Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture*, 433–434; Donnelly, *Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries*, 30–31; and Otto Norn, Christian Schultz and Erik Skov, *Bornholm*, Danmarks Kirker, vol. 7 (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1954).

⁴⁶ Poul Nørlund and Tage Ejler Christiansen, *Gyldne Altre*, 2nd edn (Århus: Wormianum, 1968).

⁴⁷ Holger Arbman, *Schweden und das karolingische Reich: Studien zu den Handelsverbindungen des 9. Jahrhundert* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1937).



Figure 6. Hammars I picture stone, c. A.D. 700-800, from Hammars, Lärbro, Gotland; Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm, inv. no. 29974:1, now at the Bunge museum, Gotland, Sweden (photograph by Harald Faith-Ell, courtesy of the Swedish National Heritage Board); height above ground c. 3 m. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>



Figure 7. Borgund stave church, late 12th century, Borgund, Lærdal, Norway (photograph by Nancy L. Wicker); c. 19 m high. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>



Figure 8. Olsker round church, c. 1150, Bornholm, Denmark (photograph by Nancy L. Wicker); c. 26 m high. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>



Figure 9. Style I bracteate (IK 429), c. A.D. 500-550, from Fredriksdal near Hälsingborg, Scania, Sweden; Lunds Universitets Historiska Museum, Lund, Sweden, inv. no. 6606 (photograph by Bengt Almgren); diameter 3.0 cm. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed *via* <http://www.brill.nl/me>

ates—some displaying Germanic Style I (Fig. 9)—were widely dispersed across Europe, from Hungary across Germany and France to England. Several Germanic tribes, such as the Langobards, Burgundians, Goths, Angles, Saxons and Jutes, traced perhaps mythic ties to their presumed Scandinavian homeland.⁴⁸ Germanic Style II developed from Style I and became a pan-European style during the seventh century, known as the Merovingian Period in Norway and the Vendel Period in Sweden. Metalwork of this Scandinavian style is found from Anglo-Saxon England across continental Europe to Russia. Thus, the art of the northern geographic periphery influenced the very heart of Europe during this period.

From the late eighth through the twelfth centuries, medieval Scandinavia was not culturally isolated. English and German missionaries attempted to convert Swedes, Norwegians and Danes, and merchants such as Ibn Fadlan from Baghdad and al-Tartushi from Córdoba visited Viking trading places, including Hedeby in northern Germany.⁴⁹ At Birka, in Sweden,

⁴⁸ For instance, see Lotte Hedeager, *Skygger af en anden virkelighed* (Copenhagen: Samleren, 1997).

⁴⁹ See Ibn Fadlan's account in Harris Birkeland, *Nordens Historie i Middelalderen efter Arabiske Kilder* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1954), 17-24, with a portion translated into English in *The Viking Achievement*, rev., eds Peter G. Foote and David M. Wilson (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980), 408-411; see Al-Tartushi's account in Birkeland, 103-104.

Chinese silk obtained via the Silk Roads has been discovered.⁵⁰ Predating the Viking period is a Buddha figurine of the early sixth century found at Helgö, very near Birka.⁵¹ Numerous Byzantine small finds—particularly pectoral crosses—and thousands of Islamic coins discovered in Sweden testify to contacts with the Middle East during the Viking Age.⁵² Even though the Eastern Orthodox church did not leave as much evidence of missionary zeal as the English and Germans did,⁵³ Russo-Byzantine-style saints' representations in twelfth-century churches at Garda and Källunge on Gotland (Fig. 10),⁵⁴ the centrally planned church of St. Olof in Sigtuna with its central tower,⁵⁵ and remnants of Orthodox liturgy⁵⁶ reflect Byzantine influence in Sweden after the end of the Viking Age.

⁵⁰ Cathy Ostrom Peters, "Silk Fragments, Silver Threads, and Bronze Buttons: The Skeletons in Birka's Closet," M.A. thesis, The University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN, 2001, 15-20. See also Agnes Geijer, *Oriental Textiles in Sweden* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1951), and Inga Hägg, *Kvinnodräkten i Birka* (Uppsala: Institutionen för arkeologi, 1974).

⁵¹ Bo Gyllensvärd, "The Buddha Found at Helgö," in *Exotic and Sacral Finds from Helgö*, Excavations at Helgö, vol. 16 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2004), 1-26.

⁵² For pectoral crosses, Wladyslaw Duczko, "Byzantine Presence in Viking Age Sweden. Archaeological Finds and their Interpretation," in *Rom und Byzanz im Norden*, ed. Michael Müller-Wille (Stuttgart: Franz Steinber Verlag, 1997), 291-311; Signe Horn Fuglesang, "A Critical Survey of Theories on Byzantine Influence in Scandinavia," in *Rom und Byzanz im Norden*, 35-58; and Martin Blindheim, "Byzantine Influence on Scandinavian Pictorial Art in the 11th and 12th Centuries," in *Les Pays du Nord et Byzance (Scandinavie et Byzance)*, ed. Rudolf Zeitler (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1981), 299-313. For coins, Thomas S. Noonan, "The Vikings and Russia: Some New Directions and Approaches to an Old Problem," in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. Ross Samson (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1991), 201-206; and idem, "The Vikings in the East: Coins and Commerce," in *Developments around the Baltic and the North Sea in the Viking Age. The Twelfth Viking Congress*, eds Björn Ambrosiani and Helen Clarke (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1994), 215-241.

⁵³ Carl F. Hallencreutz, "De berättande källorna, påvebrev och tidiga prov på inhemsk historieskrivning," in *Kristnandet i Sverige: Gamla källor och nya perspektiv*, ed. Bertil Nilsson (Uppsala: Lunne Böcker, 1996), 115-140; idem, *När Sverige Blev Europeiskt* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1993), 26-37; and idem, "What do the Runic Stones and Adam Tell Us about Byzantine Influences?" in *Rom und Byzanz*, 331-340.

⁵⁴ Nisbeth, *Bildernas Predikan*, 58-60; Fuglesang, *A Critical Survey*, 47-49; and Svetlana Vasilyeva, "Bysantinska traditioner i Gotlands konst under 1100-talet, *Fornvännen* 104 (2009), 97-111.

⁵⁵ Erland Lagerlöf, *Gotland och Bysans: Bysantiskt inflytande på den gotländska kyrkokonsten under medeltiden* (Visby: Ödins Förlag 1999).

⁵⁶ Per Beskow and Reinhart Staats, "Runor och liturgi," in *Nordens kristnande i europeisk perspektiv: Tre uppsatser* (Skara: Viktoria Bokförlag, 1994), 16-36.



Figure 10. Unidentified saint, wall painting in tower arch, Russo-Byzantine c. 1200; Garde church, Gotland, Sweden (photograph by Sören Hallgren, courtesy of the Swedish National Heritage Board).

Although movements of missionaries and traders from south to north have been assumed to denote interchange from the culturally ascendant areas to the culturally backward peripheries, there was travel and influence in both directions. Scandinavians went out into the wider world and made an impact from the British Isles to Russia.⁵⁷ Vikings settled in York, Dublin,

⁵⁷ Viking connections to the East have been studied at least since T. J. Arne, *La Suède et l'Orient* (Uppsala: K. W. Appelbergs, 1914); Władysław Duczko, *Viking Rus: Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

Novgorod, Kiev and the Wendish coast of Poland and Germany. Swedish Vikings served in the Varangian Guard in Constantinople, leaving two runic inscriptions in Hagia Sophia (one that perhaps reads “Halfdan was here”) and commemorated at home by over two dozen runic inscriptions, such as one at Ed in Uppland that was sponsored by Ragnvald who was “leader of the host in Greece.”⁵⁸ Vikings were even seen on camel-back in Baghdad, as reported by Ibn Khurdadhbih.⁵⁹ Exogamous marriages such as Ingegerd (1001-1050), daughter of Olof Skötkonung of Sigtuna, to Jaroslav I (the Wise), Grand Prince of Novgorod and Kiev, attest to the forging of cross-cultural ties for political gain.⁶⁰ Orthodoxy was chosen over Western Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in Russia by the Scandinavian Rus’ who traded, settled and eventually ruled there.

In the West, besides attacking the British Isles, Vikings raided the coast of Spain and passed through the Straits of Gibraltar to Italy and the North African coast.⁶¹ After harrying the coast of France, they penetrated the upper reaches of the Loire and the Seine. A few characteristic oval brooches of late Viking style found in France testify to their presence there.⁶² Finally, Rollo (Old Norse *Hrólfr*)—the ancestor of William the Conqueror—was ceded land in Normandy, literally “the land of the Northmen.”⁶³ The Viking legacy persisted in countless place names in Normandy, including compounds with *bec* from Old Norse *bekkr* (stream) and *tot* from *toft* (village).⁶⁴ William’s fleet, pictured in the Bayeux Tapestry, was dependent

⁵⁸ Elisabeth Svärdström, “Runorna i Hagia Sofia,” *Fornvännen* 65 (1970), 247-249; and Mats G. Larsson, “Nyfunna runor i Hagia Sofia,” *Fornvännen* 84 (1989), 12-14. For Swedish runestones commemorating expeditions eastward, see Mats G. Larsson, *Runstenar och utlandsfärder* (Lund: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1990); and Sven B. F. Jansson, *Runes in Sweden*, 38-74. For the Ed inscription, see Jansson, *Upplands Runinskrifter*, vol. 1, U 112.

⁵⁹ Noonan, “When Did Rus/Rus’ Merchants First Visit Khazaria and Baghdad?” *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 7 (1987-1991), 213-219.

⁶⁰ Hallencreutz, *Kristnandet i Sverige*, 116.

⁶¹ Since Viking raids and settlement in the British Isles are better known than their other forays, I shall not discuss the western expansion of the Vikings here. For Iberia and the Mediterranean, see F. Donald Logan, *The Vikings in History*, 2nd edn (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), 124-128.

⁶² A pair of brooches from Pitres is illustrated by Jean Renaud, *Les Vikings en France* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 2000), 61.

⁶³ Lucien Musset, “L’origine de Rollon,” in *Nordica et Normannica* (Paris: Société des études Nordiques, 1997), 383-387.

⁶⁴ Renaud, *Les Vikings en France*, 117-120.

upon Viking ship-building techniques, and a Viking-type boat is carved on the south transept of Bayeux Cathedral.⁶⁵ The French dialect in Normandy in general and its maritime vocabulary in particular is heavily influenced by Old Norse.⁶⁶ The Vikings were decisive for Norman civilization, and, in turn, Norman culture—not least its ship-building techniques—was formative for Gothic art and architecture. Kenneth John Conant noted the contribution of the Northmen at Jumièges, mentioning the importance of their skills with water transport in bringing limestone from Caen.⁶⁷ Paul Frankl observed that the method of centering for Gothic ribs “is reminiscent of the method still used today for building boats and, as the Normans were seafaring people, shipbuilders were presumably entrusted with the work of constructing centering.”⁶⁸ In a more general sense, the seminal scholars of Gothic architecture credited the Normans for Romanesque antecedents of a crucial element of the Gothic style, the rib vault with responds.⁶⁹ More recently, Eric Fernie reiterates the debt of Gothic architecture to the Romanesque of northern France and Norman England; by extension, one may assert that Gothic architecture would not have developed as it did without the Vikings.⁷⁰

In summarizing critiques of the earlier generation of scholars of Gothic architecture, Stephen Murray notes Sauerländer’s questioning of their “excessive concentration upon major monuments in France.”⁷¹ Murray further observes that there is a current trend toward regional studies, and he lists specialists writing about nearly every region of Europe—except Scandinavia. The urgent need to move toward a more inclusive view of European medieval art is not limited to the Gothic period. Richard E. Sullivan avers that much of medieval culture contained contradictory ele-

⁶⁵ Renaud, *Les Vikings en France*, 123.

⁶⁶ Renaud, *Les Vikings en France*, 110–113; Musset, “L’héritage maritime des Scandinaves II,” in *Nordica et Normannica*, 323–335; and Elisabeth Ridel, ed., *L’héritage maritime des Vikings en Europe de l’ouest* (Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2002).

⁶⁷ Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture*, 442.

⁶⁸ Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, 43.

⁶⁹ Henri Focillon, *The Art of the West*, vol. 2: *Gothic Art*, 2nd edn (London: Phaidon, 1969), 4; Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, rev. 2nd edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974); Louis Grodecki, *Gothic Architecture* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), 37–38; and Jean Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 7–10.

⁷⁰ Eric Fernie, “Romanesque Architecture,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, 307.

⁷¹ Stephen Murray, “The Study of Gothic Architecture,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, 389–391.

ments and proposes that medieval historians should “treat the most obvious feature of early medieval history, that is, cultural plurality.”⁷² Noting that the Carolingian period was marked by “layer upon layer of diversity and dichotomy,” he argues that “this pluralism needs to be admitted and its features examined for their own sake rather than being treated as exceptions to the normative aspects of . . . society.”⁷³ *Convivencia* in Spain remains a better-known example of multicultural encounters,⁷⁴ but the Viking Age offers a similar model of diversity that can enrich our understanding of medieval Europe as a whole. Vikings interacted with Byzantine rulers in Constantinople and Jewish traders in Khazaria, and the Swedish trading site of Birka, for instance, was a Viking-Age melting pot where pagan farmers met Muslim merchants and such Western European Christian missionaries as Ansgar, the “apostle of the North.”⁷⁵ Despite the reputation of rape and pillage by Vikings, multicultural tolerance and cooperation appears to have reigned in Viking trading areas, and the conversion to Christianity was characterized by gradual and peaceful accommodation.

Conclusion: What Would be Gained from Inclusion of Scandinavian Art?

I have suggested some contributions that Scandinavian art can make to the study of medieval art by considering the minor arts in context, acknowledging the methodological contribution of the typological method of classification, and scrutinizing core-periphery assumptions. Perhaps we first must experience a remedial stage of bringing attention to far-flung artistic traditions, such as those of Scandinavia, before we can progress to a more inclusive view of medieval art—just as feminist art history had to pass through an androcentric critique and the “add-women-and-stir” phase

⁷² Richard E. Sullivan, “The Middle Ages in the Western Tradition: Some Reconsiderations,” in *Essays on Medieval Civilization*, ed. Bede Karl Lackner and Kenneth Roy Philip (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1978), 3-31 (note 24 on p. 31).

⁷³ Richard E. Sullivan, “The Carolingian Age: Reflections on Its Place in the History of the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 64.2 (1989), 267-306 (305-306).

⁷⁴ See, in this issue, Kogman-Appel, n. 11.

⁷⁵ Hallencreutz, *När Sverige Blev Europeiskt*, 13-23; Noonan, “When did Rus/Rus’ Visit Khazaria?”; Judah Eisenstein, *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: 19 Firsthand Accounts* (London: Routledge, 1930; reprint New York, NY: Dover, 1987); and Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii. Anskar: The Apostle of the North, 801-865* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1921).

before progressing to a more nuanced gendered art history.⁷⁶ The search for cultural integration in Europe, fueled by the move toward economic alliances, has been pursued through a number of wide-ranging initiatives that also promote the goal of an inclusive conception of medieval art.

Scandinavian art was incorporated into this search for a shared, multi-cultural European past in two projects during the 1990s. The Council of Europe Project on the Cultural Routes of the Vikings brought attention to a common cultural heritage with well-attended Viking exhibitions in Paris, Berlin and Copenhagen in 1992.⁷⁷ As a follow-up, the European Council selected fifty Viking sites as “Highlights of the Viking World” to emphasize their extensive contacts. Besides locations in the Scandinavian countries, additional sites in the British Isles, France, Germany, Poland, Lithuania and Russia were chosen to underscore the broad impact of the Vikings. Another international research project, entitled “Transformation of the Roman World, A.D. 400–900,” was sponsored by the European Science Foundation from 1993 to 1997. This endeavor, culminating in five linked exhibitions, examined the transition from late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages in all regions—even Scandinavia—that felt the impact of Rome, thus countering a tendency to view only the areas that were invaded by the Romans as the “true” Europe.⁷⁸ The project challenged the misconception that the so-called Dark Ages reflected a “primitive and culturally deprived medieval world bereft of great art,”⁷⁹ demonstrating that the end of the Roman Empire was more complex than simply invasions and migrations of tribes from the North. Both of these projects stressed that the northern reaches of Europe were not culturally peripheral in the early medieval period.

If the margins are shown to be integral, one may well ask where the peripheries are. It could be argued that the inclusion of these topographies

⁷⁶ Nancy L. Wicker and Bettina Arnold, “Introduction,” in *From the Ground Up: Beyond Gender Theory in Archaeology*, eds Wicker and Arnold, British Archaeological Reports 812 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999), 1; and Charlotte Bunch, *Passionate Politics: Essays, 1968–1986, Feminist Theory in Action* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 140.

⁷⁷ Dan Carlsson, “Kulturvägar genom Europe—följ vikingarnas spår!” *Populär Arkeologi* 16.2 (1998), 12–13.

⁷⁸ Cris Shore, “Imagining the New Europe: Identity and Heritage in European Community Discourse,” in *Cultural Identity and Archaeology: The Construction of European Communities*, eds Paul Graves-Brown, Sián Jones and Clive Gamble (London: Routledge, 1996), 96–115 (105).

⁷⁹ Richard Hodges, “The Not-So-Dark Ages,” 61.

merely pushes the boundaries out farther. Most of early medieval Scandinavian art is non-Christian, non-Mediterranean and non-monumental, and addressing this “other” helps to define what is foundational. While Christianity served as a fundamental bond that unified most medieval art throughout Europe, no such glue was present in the North where conversion did not occur until after the year 1000. Both the diversity and the interconnectedness of various peripheries of medieval art can be given greater consideration in the study of medieval art without threatening the core. Although medieval art of the outer rim of Europe has often been overlooked, it has much to offer, not simply for tracing influences from the center, but also in its own right as a participant in the formation of European culture. From the Migration Period through the Viking Age, not only were the minor arts major, but Scandinavian art was formative rather than derivative, contributing to the dominant mode of artistic traditions rather than merely being indebted to it. Scandinavian contributions were agents in the formation of mainstream European culture—and even Gothic architecture may ultimately be indebted to the Vikings.

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